

A Brief Discussion about Wang Yangming's Thoughts on Children's Education

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Abstract: *The Principles of Children's Education* and *the Teaching Pact* are the concentrated embodiment of Wang yangming's children's education thoughts and the practice of his theory of "agreement between knowledge and action". Through reading these two articles carefully, we can know Wang Yangming's thoughts on Children's education. Wang believed that the main task of children's education was to cultivate one's moral character, put forward three principles: freedom, understanding and practice, and formulated the concrete education implementation plan. Wang Yangming's thoughts are still of great significance to solve today's children's education problems.

1. Brief Introduction to Wang Yangming's Life

Wang Yangming, Courtesy name Shouren, Literary name Boan, Pen name Yang-ming.1472-1529.China, was a famous politician, militarist, thinker, philosopher and educator in the mid Ming Dynasty. In 1499, the 12th year of the reign of Emperor Hongzhi, Wang Yangming was accepted as a scholar and began to work in politics, and his career in the official world went through several ups and downs. In 1506, the first Year of the reign of Emperor Zhengde, Wang Yangming was relegated to the post of Chancellor of Guizhou Longchang Station for opposing the eunuch Liu Jin. In this very harsh environment, Wang Yangming reflected day and night, and suddenly had an enlightenment and realized that "the way of the sage, my nature is self-contained", and thus Yangming's philosophy of mind was born, which is called "the Longchang Station Enlightenment". That year, Wang Yangming turned 34 years old. Thereafter, he engaged in politics and lectured at the same time until his death at the age of 57. During his 23 years of teaching practice, Wang Yangming has incorporated his philosophy of mind into his educational outlook, especially in the area of children's education, forming a more complete and unique educational thought system.

2. The Birth of Wang Yangming's Thoughts on Children's Education

Wang Yangming's view of children's education is mainly reflected in *The Social Teaching Dogma*, which he wrote and promulgated himself. In 1518, the 13th year of the reign of Emperor Zhengde, Wang Yangming became the governor of Nan Gan. After calming the rebellion on the border, he believed that the local people were barbaric, uncivilized and unruly because they were not well educated. It is easy to get rid of thieves in the mountains, but difficult to get rid of thieves in the heart. To improve people's moral thinking, we must start with children. For this reason, Wang Yangming strived to develop elementary education and established community schools. He promulgated *The Social Teaching Dogma*, not only asked schools to comply, but also asked local officials to visit community schools from time to time, to reward schools for good implementation and to punish schools for non-implementation, so that the dogma could be effectively implemented.

3. The Main Contents of Wang Yangming's Thoughts on Children's Education

The Social Teaching Dogma is composed of two articles, the first of which is *The Principles of Children's Education from Teacher Liu Bo-song etc.* (hereinafter referred to as *The Principles of Children's Education*), which mainly elaborates the basic principles of children's education and emphasizes some issues that children should pay attention to from the perspective of educational

theory. The second is *The Teaching Pact*, which provides for specific teaching methods in community schools, proposes a specific educational implementation plan and prepares a curriculum for teachers to teach.

3.1 The Fundamental Task of the Children's Education

In the opening pages of *The Principles of Children's Education*, Wang Yangming wrote: "The ancient education was to teach children the content of human relations and morality. Later, when people became interested in reciting books, the righteousness of education of the former king disappeared. So today when educating children, teachers must regard filial piety, loyalty, faithfulness, propriety, justice and honor as the main contents of education." [1]

Wang yangming adhered to the traditional Chinese Confucian educational thoughts. He believed that the main task of children's education was not to impart technical knowledge, but to cultivate one's moral character. In Wang Yangming's era, the children's enlightenment education developed rapidly, and there were many forms of community schooling, and the number of schools and the number of students in school increased significantly [2]. However, under the influence of Cheng Zhu's Neo Confucianism and the imperial examination system, more and more teachers and students regarded *The Four Books and Five Classics* as the golden rule. They regarded passing passed the imperial examinations and becoming a government official as their purpose of reading. Teachers are more likely to ask children to memorize and recite books. Wang Yangming made a sharp attack on the educational reality at that time. He believed that reading was only a way to understand one's mind, instead of memorizing by rote and reading mechanically.

3.2 The Teaching Principles of the Children's Education

Tao Xingzhi, a famous educator in China, once said: "to cultivate and educate people like planting flowers and trees, we should first understand the characteristics of flowers and trees and distinguish different feelings." [3] When the teacher understands that every student is a person with personal characteristics, ambition, wisdom and character structure, such understanding can help the teacher to love and respect children. Wang Yangming putted forward many original ideas in accordance with the educational principles of children's physical and mental development according to the shortcomings of children's education at that time and the characteristics of children's age.

3.2.1 Oppose Restraint and Stresses Freedom and Equality

Wang Yangming uses the growth of grass and trees as a metaphor for children's educational growth. In *the Principles of Children's Education*, he wrote" Children like to play and are afraid of detention. They are like the sprouting of grass and trees, which can thrive only if they are made comfortable; if they are destroyed by excessive restraint, they will wither. The methods of educating children should be to teach children to make them inspired and internally happy thus improving themselves subconsciously. "[1] Children are lively and active, like freedom, like to play and not like to be constrained by others. But in today's fierce social competition, in order to enable children to be based on society in the future, parents' education of children often starts from prenatal education, so it seems that there is no free time for children to be born. Wang yangming advocated that children's education should conform to the characteristics of children's temperament, leave enough free space for them to fully release their own nature and make continuous progress along their own interests. The role of the teacher is appropriate guidance and more encouragement, rather than mandatory constraints, any suppression of children's personality education is not desirable. Teachers and children should establish a relationship of mutual respect and trust between teachers and students, teachers and students can carry out equal exchanges and communication. Only in this way, children can be happy, natural and happy to grow up.

3.2.2 Focus Less on Memory and More on Understanding

Wang Yangming stressed that we should pay attention to understanding and independent thinking in teaching. Someone asked him what to do if you don't remember the content when reading? He thought if you know, why have to remember. Wang Yangming believed that students

should not blindly memorize books, teachers should not blindly catch up with the progress, and only 100 words should be taught to each student who can learn 200 words according to his talent and personality.

For example, when learning poetry, teachers should pay attention to inspiration and guidance, rather than let students recite it sentence by sentence. It opposes the traditional indoctrination teaching, and believes that the implementation of such teaching methods, students become prisoners without freedom, can only accept knowledge mechanically according to the framework of textbooks and the views of teachers, completely erasing the creativity of children.

Wang Yangming advocated the excellent qualities of independent thinking. According to his thoughts, learning is precious because of self-reliance and independent thinking. After independent thinking, it is believed to be fallacy, even if it comes from Confucius, it cannot be considered as truth. After independent thinking, it cannot be considered as fallacy, even if it comes from ordinary people, it cannot be considered as falsehood [4]. He also pointed out that if children's learning is from the heart, through their own thinking to obtain knowledge, then this kind of learning is effective. On the contrary, it is impossible to master knowledge well, if you study by rote. Therefore, the method of learning by rote is inadvisable. If you study by rote, you can't make it well. Research has shown over and over that you'll quickly forget information that you cram, so it won't help you in the long term.

3.2.3 Strive Mightily to Act Against Talk

"Knowing is the beginning of doing and doing is the completion of knowing. Knowing and doing are one, they can't be divided into two things." [1] Wang Yangming said. It means knowledge and action should go hand in hand His theory of "agreement between knowledge and action" provides a philosophical basis for his view of children's education [5].

Wang Yangming believed that the process of children's moral education is a concrete practical process, not an abstract theoretical learning. Children's moral education must be derived from children's subjective conscious and voluntary moral practice. The cultivation of children's consciousness and ability of moral autonomy should begin with the moral practice of children's personal recognition of "conscience". Moral practice permeates every field of daily life, and moral choice is often made according to general moral principles and specific situations. Therefore, children's education is not to accept the ready-made theory, but to return to the realistic living world of people, interact with their individual experience and emotion, and develop the ability of reaching with real significance. As a teacher, first of all, should constantly improve her or his moral cultivation and learning character, and demonstrate by example; second, they should pay attention to observing and understanding children's daily behavior, and timely find out children's moral questions in daily life, and correct them in time. Today teachers should combine the teaching content with the reality of life, create situational teaching, try to contact students' life examples, and create scenes with the help of modern teaching methods such as multimedia, so that students can use the material tools of daily life to create scenes, put students in situations, and perform according to their roles.

3.3 The Methods of the Children's Education

Wang Yangming believed that the methods of educating children should be to induce the poems to develop his willpower, to guide children by learning etiquette in order to maintain their dignity, to open his perception by reading .In Wang Yangming's view, poetry, etiquette and reading are not only the knowledge content of children's learning in school, but also an important way of children's moral standard learning, as well as a preparation and connection for moral life such as determination, happiness and wisdom. In *the Teaching Pact*, Wang Yangming stipulated that the daily curriculum arrangement of children teaching is: "first, to test the morality, second, to recite the books, third, to learn the etiquette, fourth, to read books, fifth, to read the poetry." [1] The curriculum covers the comprehensive education of children's moral, intellectual, aesthetics and work, so that children's physical and mental development can be achieved in all aspects.

4. Conclusion

Education is the foundation of a country and the inexhaustible driving force of a country's prosperity. Children's education is the most basic and important part of the whole education process. It is because families and even the whole country attach great importance to children's education. And this kind of attention degree also led to some abnormal development of children's education.

Wang Yangming advocated education according to the characteristics of the child and opposed dogmatic educational methods and brutal means of education such as corporal punishment, with a clear tendency against authoritarianism and dogmatism. This concept, principle and method of children's moral education, which follows the principle of nature and "agreement between knowledge and action", is still of great significance to solve today's children's education problems.

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